Identification of Oswald called 'easy'

Bulletin 10/21/79

Dallas — (AP) — County medical examiners say it would be "very easy" to identify the body in the grave of Lee Harvey Oswald and answer at least one of the questions surrounding the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

The question was posed by British author Michael H.B. Eddowes, who contends in his book, "The Oswald File," that Oswald never returned from the Soviet Union.

Instead, he says, a Russian agent named Alek James Hiddell came to the United States, using Oswald's name, and fatally shot Kennedy on Nov. 22, 1963.

Dallas County authorities are trying to get authorities in neighboring Tarrant County (Fort Worth) to exhume the body so tests can be performed to try to establish whether it is that of Oswald.

Meanwhile, The New York Post said yesterday that FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover thought an imposter might be passing as Oswald several years before Kennedy was killed.

The copyrighted Post story said Hoover, now dead, sent a memo to the State Department on June 6, 1960, when Oswald was known to be in Russia, asking for any information the State Department might have on Oswald "since there's a possiblity that an imposter is using Oswald's birth certificate."

The Post did not say whether any information was forwarded to Hoover.

It said that nine months later Edward J. Hickey, State Department passport bureau chief, warned the department's consular section in a memo: "It has been stated that there is an impostor using Oswald identification data and that there is no doubt the Soviets would love to get hold of his valid passport."

The Post said the documents were obtained from the National Archives under the Freedom of Information Act.

The Warren Commission identified Oswald as the lone gunman who shot Kennedy in Dallas. Oswald was shot to death two days later by Jack Ruby, who died of cancer while in jail.

Last week, Dallas County Medical Examiner Charles Petty and his assistant, Dr. Linda Norton, requested an exhumation of the body in Oswald's grave to compare with Oswald's Marine medical records.

It would be "very easy to make a 100 percent identification" of the body in the Fort Worth grave, Ms. Norton said at a news conference late Friday.

She said discrepancies between the Marine records and the autopsy report were numerous: "Scars on the body . . . color of eyes, height."

Marine records show Oswald was two inches taller than the man arrested for Kennedy's death. And the autopsy failed to show evidence of a mastoidectomy behind Oswald's left ear, she said.

Ms. Norton said the state of the body after 16 years would depend on factors such as embalming and the condition of the casket.

She said she expected the body's soft tissue would be gone, but added, "I think there's a very high possibility the bone structure will be intact. Assuming the teeth are intact . . . the comparison should be very easy to do."

She said the Marine records show Oswald had "a great number of fillings" that would still be evident.

"The mastoidectomy and the teeth are the key," Petty added.

Oswald's grave is in Tarrant County, and the exhumation request must be approved by Tarrant County Medical Examiner Nazimuddin Peerwani.

Petty said he had not yet heard from Peerwani, but county officials have said they will not allow the exhumation unless ordered to do so by a court.

Peerwani has said he must have the approval of the district attorney and Oswald's mother in Fort Worth before an exhumation. Mrs. Oswald has refused to comment because of pending litigation.

But Eddowes, who flew to Dallas on Friday, said Marguerite Oswald approached the medical examiner in 1968 to have her son's body dug up.

"She said in an article . . . that she had never been told her son had been shot in the arm during Marine service, but the body had two bullet wounds," he said at an airport news conference.